

National Alliance of HUD Tenants

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HUD Tenant Leaders Demand Congress Declare Trump's 2020 Budget "Dead on Arrival"

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Elected leaders of the national US tenants union today demanded immediate and total rejection by Congress of President Donald Trump's 2020 budget request, released on March 11.

"Its actually worse than last year. Trump's budget will push people from their homes; starve seniors, children and families; and deny health care to millions of people," said Geraldine Collins, President of the National Alliance of HUD Tenants (NAHT), who lives in a senior housing development in Manhattan. "People will die if these proposals see the light of day. Congress should declare Trump's 2019 budget 'dead on arrival' instead."

Added Collins, "The recent shutdown crisis led by Trump caused millions to panic that they would be evicted because HUD and USDA funds would run out for their homes. Landlords are now warier about taking Section 8 tenants, and housing authorities are under severe pressure to sell off public housing. You have to ask: was the shutdown a deliberate attempt to destroy HUD rental housing? Another 'shutdown showdown' is looming again in September over Trump's Wall." Collins noted that the 16% cut proposed this year is consistent with the Heritage Foundation's draconian plan to terminate HUD rental housing over 10 years, embraced by Trump's Chief of Staff and former Budget Director Mick Mulvaney .

Like last year, Trump's FY 2020 budget would cut thousands of people from Section 8 Vouchers. It would cut an astounding 38% from Public Housing operating budgets, already underfunded at 85% of needs. Trump proposes *zero* funds to address the \$40 billion backlog of needed health and safety repairs in Public Housing. Trump also proposes to end grants to cities for community development and new housing. Overall, the \$8.7 billion in proposed cuts—16.4% below current levels-- would be the deepest cuts in HUD's history.

Trump again proposes draconian rent increases for millions of Americans who receive HUD rental assistance. Trump's budget would raise rents for most tenants from 30 to 35% percent of income, triple "minimum rents" paid by the most destitute, and eliminate deductions that keep rents affordable for seniors and disabled people. Overall, rents would jump overnight an average of 20% for 4.6 million households.

"Now that Trump has cut taxes for the richest of the rich, he wants to pay for them by raising rents on the poorest of the poor", comments Deborah Arnold, 55, a minister and community activist and NAHT Vice President from Atlanta, Georgia.

Trump has again proposed bogus "work requirements" for HUD rental assistance, Food Stamps and Medicaid. NAHT leaders denounced these proposals as administratively wasteful, ineffective and punitive, especially in the absence of jobs, training and resources to make them work. "Trump lives in public housing--the White House. Will a work requirement be imposed on him?," asked Geraldine Collins, 64, a disabled, retired medical administrator. "Congress should make Trump do something useful with his "executive time," rather than tweeting, playing golf, watching cable TV, and destroying the nation's social safety net."

Beyond that, Trump has proposed to slash virtually every mandatory "safety net" program for the American people. His budget would repeal the Affordable Care Act, take away \$850 billion from Medicare and \$777 billion from Medicaid, and cut Food Stamps by 30%. "Raising Medicare costs for seniors like me

will make it even harder to pay rent,” commented Charlotte Rodgers, a retired government investigator and NAHT VP/East from Brooklyn, New York. “Eliminating deductions and raising the rent at the same time will really put the screws to retirees on fixed incomes.”

The “savings” would be used to fund an immediate \$165 billion hike in Pentagon war spending and shift trillions to a new generation of first strike nuclear weapons, increased war spending, and the Wall.

Comments Rachel Williams, 63, an Army widow, minister and long time community activist in Beaumont, Texas and NAHT Board VP/West: “This really is a “war” budget! Trump is declaring war against the American people, to pay for a dangerous nuclear arms race that will make us all less safe. Military spending should protect Americans, not throw us out on the street. Homeland security begins with a home!”

Adds Eleanor Walden, 88, a long time civil rights and social justice activist living in senior housing in Berkeley, California, “Trump’s budget and other actions criminalize immigrants, poor people and people of color while subsidizing division and hate among the American people. Trumps budget is a recipe for war, inequality, racism, and fear.

“Congress should instead pass the Peoples Budget to embrace prosperity, peace, unity and hope for our future.” The Congressional Progressive Caucus is expected to release its FY 2020 Peoples Budget alternative in late March.

Founded in 1991, NAHT is the national tenants union representing 1.7 million families in privately-owned, HUD assisted multifamily housing. NAHT’s mission is to empower residents to save and improve their homes as affordable housing.

NAHT can connect interested media outlets with resident leaders and organizations across the US for local comments. Contact: Michael Kane, michaelkane@saveourhomes.org 617-522-4523 or 617-233-1885.